United Nations A/C.2/56/SR.25

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
6 December 2002
English
Original: Spanish

Second Committee

Summary record of the 25th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 6 November 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Barnwell (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Guyana)
later: Mr. Djumala (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Indonesia)

Contents

Agenda item 97: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation (*continued*)

(a) Women in development (*continued*)

(b) Human resources development (*continued*)

(c) High-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership (*continued*)

(d) Implementation of the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, and implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade (*continued*)

Agenda item 96: Sectoral policy questions (*continued*)

(a) Business and development (*continued*)

Agenda item 98: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*)

(b) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (*continued*)

(c) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (*continued*)

(e) Further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

1-62154 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 97: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation (*continued*) (A/56/221, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/306 and A/56/362-S/2001/87)

(a) Women in development (*continued*) (A/56/321 and Corr.1)

(b) Human resources development (*continued*) (A/56/162 and 306)

(c) High-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership (*continued*) (A/56/364 and 482)

(d) Implementation of the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, and implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade (*continued*) (A/56/306)

1. **Ms. Weill-Hallé** (North American Liaison Office, International Fund for Agricultural Development) said that human and economic development required continued efforts to move gender issues from the margin to the mainstream. Gender inequalities were undermining global human and economic growth. Closing gender gaps in education resulted in faster economic growth, and improvements in the socio-economic status and health of women also had an immediate and lasting impact on the well-being of the entire family.

2. The experience of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) had shown that rural women held the key to the goals in household food security and nutrition that were central to the Fund's mandate and to the survival of poor rural households. In IFAD-assisted projects, women had proved to be a driving force in making them effective and in reducing poverty. However, the restricted access of women to knowledge, assets and services and their lesser influence on the decisions that affected their lives curtailed their ability to perform their multiple roles.

3. Consequently, women must be empowered to play active roles in decision-making and they must be ensured access to knowledge, technologies, assets and services. In developing countries, microfinancing had enabled women to increase their asset base, diminish their vulnerability, strengthen their self-confidence and improve their social status. While it was not a panacea for poverty reduction, microfinancing could contribute greatly to improving the living conditions of the rural and urban poor. Recognizing that, IFAD dedicated significant attention to the development of rural finance systems, institutional diversity and sustainable access of the rural poor to financial services. Roughly two thirds of IFAD projects had a rural finance component. That experience had yielded a number of lessons related to the gender perspective on microfinance. First, for poor rural women, access to financial services was more important than the level of interest rate they had to pay for the services. Therefore, it was important to focus on building sustainable rural finance institutions while at the same time expanding the outreach of those institutions towards the poor. Secondly, decisions on who should be the owners and who the users of microfinance institutions were best left to the people concerned. In some cultures, women would decide to be the sole owners; in others, they might prefer to form a separate unit within a microfinance institution or opt for some other solution. Thirdly, microfinance institutions needed to become more gender-sensitive in terms of the financial products and services they offered and in their operating procedures. Fourthly, because in most countries microenterprise activities were differentiated by sex, and support was customarily concentrated on microenterprises run by men, business development services specifically for women microentrepreneurs were needed.

4. Also, in countries where a wealth of rural finance activities had developed, it might be useful to elaborate national policies and strategies on financial services for the rural poor, both women and men. Such strategies could facilitate the provision of finance services to the poor, ensure that different initiatives were coherent and complementary, support the creation of an appropriate regulatory and legislative framework, and help develop demand-based and sustainable financial services over the long term. To make a reality of the millennium development goals, over half of which were directly correlated with the improved capabilities and well-being of rural women, focused efforts would be

required to redress gender inequalities and improve the social and economic status of poor rural women. IFAD promised to continue its work to achieve that goal.

5. **Ms. Siddharth** (International Labour Organization) said that the International Labour Organization (ILO) provided technical assistance to developing countries and countries in transition, in the form of skills training for people living in poverty or social exclusion. Analysis had shown that gender issues were complex and cross-cutting, affecting all aspects of employment. The ILO adopted a holistic approach, which embraced the promotion of core labour standards and fundamental rights at work; job creation, with the emphasis on women; the improvement of working conditions, including social protection; and human resources development, training and social dialogue.

6. It was important to make skills development strategies and programmes more responsive to the needs of people, especially women living in poverty. New methodologies for formulating training and curriculum development programmes had therefore been introduced in a number of countries, with the aim of fostering collaboration with public and private training providers and with the relevant ministries. The ILO Capacity-building Programme on Gender, Poverty and Employment aimed: (a) to enhance the capacity of local, national and regional stakeholders to understand the interrelationship between gender, poverty and employment and to assess, develop and implement anti-poverty and employment promotion actions; and (b) to mainstream a gender-and-employment perspective into national and international policy agendas on poverty eradication. The programme had already begun in the Southern Cone of Latin America, Southern Africa, some Arab States and Central and Eastern Europe.

7. A striking trend in micro- and small enterprises was the significant rise in the number of women entrepreneurs. In many countries, such women had to contend with policy, regulatory and institutional environments that were unfriendly and had a bias against small enterprises. Nonetheless, more and more women were owners or managers of small enterprises in the less traditional sectors. ILO technical cooperation activities in that regard included assistance in designing and implementing programmes in the following fields: skills and entrepreneurship training, productivity improvement, managerial capacity-building, accessing resources, institution-building and policy advice and research. ILO support for addressing gender concerns would be further extended by a new programme for boosting employment through small enterprise development, with a view to both reflecting and encouraging the growing number of women entrepreneurs.

8. Women continued to occupy the lower and middle ranks of organizations, had unequal access to training and promotion, encountered difficulty in entering male-dominated professions and were paid less than men for equal work. Faced with increasing competition in the global marketplace, the advantage lay with organizations that maximized the potential of their workforce by addressing the needs and aspirations of all their workers, both men and women. ILO supported the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Full Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods and would contribute actively to the preparation for the high-level segment of the 2002 session of the Economic and Social Council on the theme of the contribution of human resources development, including in the areas of health and education, to the process of development.

9. **Mr. Al-Khal** (Bahrain) said that legislation to promote the cause of women had been enacted in his country since the 1920s, and had dealt with questions relating to the legal situation of women, the right to the ownership and management of property and the right to health care, education, employment and social security. Women's political rights, including the right to vote and the right to participate in public life, had been reaffirmed. The progress made had been due to the tireless work of the National Council for Women, whose efforts had been crowned with success. Women had been encouraged to participate actively in the life of society and in social and economic affairs and at the same time to strengthen the family, which was the basic unit of society. Women participated in government, were members of institutions of civil society and occupied senior posts in ministries. Some ambassadors were women.

10. In the context of the changes taking place in the economy and thus in the labour market, it was important to devote more attention to human resource development. It would therefore be necessary to modify education policies in order to adapt to those changes. A functional relationship would need to be developed between education and the knowledge-based

professions, which had assumed more importance in the new economy. Human development reports would need to be examined and consideration would need to be given to the defects and drawbacks in existing labour legislation. The Government had adopted measures to stimulate national investment and promote foreign investment in the field of human resources, among others. It was crucial that experiences should be shared with other countries in order to strengthen international cooperation with a view to speeding up development that would lead to a better future.

11. **Ms. Soettady** (Indonesia) said that her delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The issue of women in development had been discussed in the Committee for over two decades, and it was further addressed in the Beijing Platform for Action. In debates on the issue, it had been agreed that the mobilization of women — particularly through gender mainstreaming in all walks of life, including development — was a critical factor in the advancement of women. Although the number of businesses owned by women had steadily increased throughout the world, women continued to encounter constraints in seeking access to financial resources. Such constraints had been aggravated by the steep downturn in the global economy and the uncertainties in the wake of the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001.

12. In developing countries, the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children, were worst affected by the negative impact of globalization. In the face of that situation, existing commitments to empower women must be met and strategies already adopted must be translated into reality. Women must be given access to credit at both the macro and the micro levels, to education, to high-paying jobs and to administrative and managerial positions, so that they could secure sustainable livelihoods for their families and communities. Such issues, particularly the gender perspective in macroeconomic development and the gender dimension in financing for development should be taken up at the International Conference on Financing for Development.

13. **The Chairman** said that the Commission had concluded the general debate on agenda item 97.

Agenda item 96: Sectoral policy questions (*continued*)

(a) Business and development (*continued*)

Draft resolution on business and development (A/C.2/56/L.18)

14. **Mr. Traub** (United States of America) introduced the draft resolution, which was sponsored by his delegation.

Agenda item 98: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*)

(b) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/C.2/56/L.15)

Draft resolution on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

15. **Mr. Moeini Meybodi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

16. *Mr. Djumala (Indonesia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

(c) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (*continued*)

Draft resolution on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/C.2/56/L.17)

17. **Mr. Moeini Meybodi** (Islamic Republic of Iran), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the sponsors had made a number of revisions to the text which would be duly transmitted to the secretariat of the Committee.

(e) Further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*)

Draft resolution on the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/C.2/56/L.16)

18. **Mr. Moeini Meybodi** (Islamic Republic of Iran), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the sponsors had made a number of revisions to the text which would be only transmitted to the secretariat of the Committee.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.